

Since its inception, Post #4347 members have canvassed the Freehold area for needy families during the holiday season. Last December, like many before it, they held a Christmas party for nearly 100 needy kids, kids who otherwise would have no holiday celebration.

As extraordinary as this effort was, it was just one of many times that VFW Post #4347 has worked on behalf of those in need. Throughout the years, VFW Post #4347 has gone the extra mile to take care of not only our veterans, but also our community.

Freehold VFW Post #4347 is a great asset to both Central New Jersey and our nation. I urge all my colleagues to join me today in recognizing its dedication to our veterans, community service and Central New Jersey.

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF A RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE TO IMPLEMENT A NATIONWIDE COHESIVE FUELS REDUCTION STRATEGY

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 22, 2000

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution. I do it on behalf of all the people who live near our National Forests and want to see a change in the way they are managed.

As of today, over six and half million acres have burned in the West. That's an area larger than the entire state of Maryland.

This is catastrophic fire—not the beneficial natural kind—but the catastrophic. It feeds on brush and trees. It climbs up the ladder of fuels into the crowns of the largest old-growth trees, burning everything. It kills a forest completely and sterilized the ground.

Besides the threat to people, these fires kill animals; destroy habitat; release huge amounts of air pollution; and leave barren dead zones. After the fires are extinguished, the exposed soil and debris washes into streams, polluting water and killing fish.

On Tuesday, a state of emergency was declared in one of the counties I represent. Tulare County, California, is now preparing for the massive erosion and mudslides that will come from the area of the Manter Fire. That fire burned 75,000 acres just east of the new Sequoia National Monument. It killed nearly every tree.

The Administration blames it all on Smokey the Bear. They say the problem is the 100-year-old policy of suppressing forest fires. But that's only half of the problem.

In this weekend's radio address, President Clinton blamed "extreme weather and lightning" that sparked too many fires this summer.

The Assistant Secretary for Land at the Department of Interior, Sylvia Baca, said that, "Nobody could have predicted the deadly combination of drought, wind and lightning in the West this year."

But that kind of backward logic ignores the fact that we did know about the accumulation of fuel. We know about the millions of acres of dying forest.

We knew there would be a dry spell in the West.

We knew that a deadly fire season would occur.

Last April, the General Accounting Office reported to Congress that over 39 million acres of our national forests were at high risk of catastrophic fire. Another 26 million acres were reported at risk due to disease and insect infestation.

Experts have tagged the overaccumulation of brush and trees as the biggest threat facing the western environment.

Let me say that again—The biggest threat to the western environment.

Now that biggest threat has become a tragic reality.

What has the Forest Service done about it? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is not much. The only real, aggressive strategy of this Administration has been one of deliberate neglect.

We have before us a roadless policy that will close fifty million acres of forest lands.

We have a Sierra Nevada Framework that will restrict access to over 11 million acres of California forest.

We have the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Plan (ICBEMP) that would limit the use of 60 million acres in the northwest.

Add to that 2 million acres of new national monuments created just this year.

All of these proposals and changes are policies that conflict with, rather than complement, a cohesive national fire strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this year we will spend close to a billion dollars fighting catastrophic fires in the West. A lot of that will be emergency money tacked on top of the budget. Then next year, we will spend hundreds of millions more restoring some of these areas to avoid mudslides and erosion. It doesn't have to be this way.

The bipartisan resolution I am introducing today, with original cosponsors from the East, the South and the West, calls on the U.S. Forest Service and other land management agencies to create a cohesive fuels strategy.

This resolution is identical to the bill that recently passed the California State Assembly. It has strong bipartisan cosponsorship and passed on a unanimous vote.

Similar legislation has been adopted by the State Legislatures in Colorado, Idaho and Arizona, also with bipartisan support.

Our States are calling out for help. Federal forest lands need better care. Specifically:

1. We need a strategy to reduce accumulated fuels. Dense brush cannot be burned with prescribed fire until the small trees are removed mechanically. A fuels reduction strategy will include both of these important tools.

2. We need a strategy to remove diseased trees. Insects and pathogens infect 26 million acres of federal trees and they threaten state and private forests nearby. These trees can be removed and used in order to improve the overall health of the forest.

3. And we need to include states, locals and private business in the effort. A collaborative

approach will ensure that important local variations are included in the plans.

Mr. Speaker, the Forest Service is being pulled in so many directions that their mission seems unclear. I want this Congress to give them some leadership. The priority should be fuels reduction and forest health. These are the highest priority the U.S. Congress has for forest management.

This resolution says clearly that we want such a strategy incorporated into new regulatory proposals and that we want locals involved.

This summer, we have witnessed a real tragedy as millions of acres burned. But keep in mind that over 57 million acres are still at high risk. Not even ten percent of the total has burned this year.

There is still time to create a strategy and to save what's left. We need to protect the Western environment and to protect the people who live there.

HONORING U.S. ATTORNEYS AND INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM THE 9TH DISTRICT OF TEXAS

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 22, 2000

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to commend a team of law enforcement professionals, U.S. attorneys, and Internet service providers who worked together in recent weeks in federally charging a health teacher and trainer in my district of possessing and receiving child pornography.

An investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation found that he was using his home computer to download child pornography from the Internet. Authorities became aware of this man's activities through Operation Innocent Images, a partnership between U.S. Customs and the FBI that is responsible for tracking pedophiles on the Internet. The FBI has the ability to monitor certain activity over the Internet that they believe deals with child pornography or the sexual exploitation of children. In doing this, they have set up a number of operations around the country to monitor activities in a cooperative effort with local law enforcement agencies and all Internet Service Providers (ISP). ISP's help to monitor Internet activity and furnish investigative leads if they believe that a person is inappropriately using the Internet.

I'd also like to commend U.S. Attorney Mike Bradford, who succinctly stated, "Those offenders who possess and distribute child pornography perpetuate the exploitation of children depicted in the pornographic images. Those who use the Internet to acquire or exchange child pornography commit serious crimes and will be prosecuted when caught. The message we want to convey is an absolute intolerance of child exploitation."